

## *No Child Left Behind*

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On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) into law. This legislation represents a fundamental change in the education of our students and is built on the notion that every struggling child can learn and every struggling school can rebound. The laws which we placed on the books 35 years ago to help low-income children were well-intentioned, but they have not worked.

The No Child Left Behind Act provides a roadmap – and the resources – for even the most troubled public schools in America to pull themselves up, creating opportunities for local school districts, states, and especially parents to use their federal dollars to create a more effective way of educating children.

One of the key strengths of this bill is that it gives states and local communities significantly more flexibility over the management of federal dollars. This means that local school districts will finally have the power to concentrate federal dollars in areas which they deem most important and where they need them most. In return for this flexibility, children must show substantial progress in the classroom. We must demand academic achievement from children from all backgrounds, and if students are not learning, we must discover why and make appropriate changes so that no children are left behind.

Another primary goal that the bill accomplishes is to improve teacher quality. Overall, the bill requires that 95% of the funds for teacher quality go directly to the local school district, allowing local districts to use funds as they see fit for the purposes of hiring teachers, improving professional development, or finding innovative ways to reward and retain high quality teachers.

No Child Left Behind also significantly changes accountability standards with the goal of assuring that low-income students are learning equal to that of their peers. In accomplishing this, the bill specifically prohibits federally-sponsored national testing or federal control over curriculums and, in fact, sets up a series of tests to ensure that any national evaluating test is fair and objective.

This is an exceptionally positive piece of legislation for our students, and it is comprised of measures that afford local school districts unprecedented power and flexibility and ensure that every child has access to a quality education. I am pleased to have played an integral role in the passage of this legislation.